

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 8028 of the Second Extraordinary Session

By Helton

A RESOLUTION to recognize and congratulate Dr. William E. (Bill) Owens on the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary in the ministry.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should honor those individuals who have answered a divine call to the ministry and who have served with dedication, vigor, and enthusiasm to perform God's work for their congregations and their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such dedicated church leader is Dr. William E. (Bill) Owens, who will celebrate his fiftieth anniversary in the ministry on August 23, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Owens grew up in Anderson County near Clinton and graduated from Clinton High School; he is a *cum laude* graduate of Cumberland College and attained both a master's degree and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS, while attending college, Dr. Bill Owens served on the pastoral staff of three churches; he also pastored a church in Bloomfield, Kentucky, for five years before returning home to Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, Dr. Owens began an illustrious thirty-three-year tenure as Senior Pastor of Ridgedale Baptist Church in Chattanooga; his vibrant pastorate marked an era of tremendous growth and outreach for the church; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Bill Owens led the relocation of Ridgedale Baptist Church to the East Brainerd area in 1990, at which point a sanctuary was constructed, as well as a gym and several educational facilities; with the additional growth in membership, multiple services had to be held to host members numbering more than 1,000; and

WHEREAS, an additional twenty-four acres were purchased for the use of ministering to the community through recreation; at its peak, the recreation ministry of Ridgedale Baptist Church involved more than 2,000 Chattanoogaans in basketball, softball, and soccer leagues for all ages; and

WHEREAS, during Dr. Owens's tenure, summer camps for children and an after-school program were created; he also initiated a counseling ministry, with certified and licensed counselors on staff, to address needs of the church membership as well as the community; and

WHEREAS, Ridgedale Baptist Church also purchased and renovated an adjacent office building to house the youth ministry and Volunteers in Medicine, a medical clinic for the disadvantaged of the community; these commendable projects were spearheaded by members of the church under Dr. Owens's guidance; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his ministry to the membership of Ridgedale Baptist Church, Dr. Bill Owens has been an enthusiastic community supporter of Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Bible in the Schools; and

WHEREAS, after a very brief retirement, Dr. Owens became the pastor of GraceWorks Church, an interdenominational church in Chattanooga. Under his leadership, the church has grown from an attendance of eighty-five to an average of nearly 300; in addition to numerical growth, Dr. Owens has been responsible for increasing the community ministry through the broadcast of online worship and construction of a community park and sports facility on the church campus; and

WHEREAS, his leadership and service have encompassed broad contributions to the people of the region and this State; during his fifty years of ministry, Dr. Owens has served as moderator of the Hamilton County Baptist Association and the Nelson County Baptist Association, Kentucky; he has also been a member of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Committee on Committees, Committee on Arrangements, and Committee on Boards; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Bill Owens's family has always been a vital part of his ministry; his beloved wife, Darlene, was a true partner in the ministry until her passing in 2013; he is the

proud father of one son, Billy (Audrey) Owens, and one daughter, April (Michael) Lander, and the devoted grandfather of three grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Owens's commitment to God, his spiritual leadership, and his love for people, as demonstrated throughout his many years of service, are worthy of our respect and admiration; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we extend to Dr. William E. (Bill) Owens our heartfelt congratulations upon the celebration of his fiftieth anniversary in the ministry, commend him for his honorable service and spiritual inspiration, and wish him every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.